



Overview of IAMCR 2005 Conference:

Shih Hsin University, Taiwan hosted the IAMCR Conference in Taipei, 26-28 July 2005

Media Panics: Freedom, Control and Democracy in the Age of Globalisation was the theme of the IAMCR annual conference. Hosted by Shih Hsin University, this 'off-year' conference was attended by more than 270 researchers from 39 countries. Many lively paper sessions were organised by IAMCR's Section Heads and Working Group Chairs.

Participants were treated to opening plenary presentations by Professor Douglas Kellner of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) who emphasised the role of the media in perceived crises in democracy, and Diane Ying, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the Commonwealth Magazine Group in Taiwan, who pointed to the growing tendency of the Taiwanese media to thrive on the reporting of spectacles in an intensely competitive market.

Other plenaries focussed on the ways journalists report on natural and human disasters, especially in the case of the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. Asantha Sirimanne, Chief Executive of Lanka Business Online, was the first to break the news about the tsunami's impact in Sri Lanka. Professor Rohan Samarajiva of LIRNEAsia.net emphasised the crucial importance of coordination of critical communications infrastructure (see <http://www.lirneasia.net/category/documents>). Eve Chiu, Chief Executive of the Foundation for Excellent Journalism Award in Taipei, provided insight into the everyday lives of journalists who must cover disturbing events. Professor Manuel Peres i Maicas, Autonomous University of Barcelona, spoke about the extent to which media reporting of the tsunami met ethical standards.

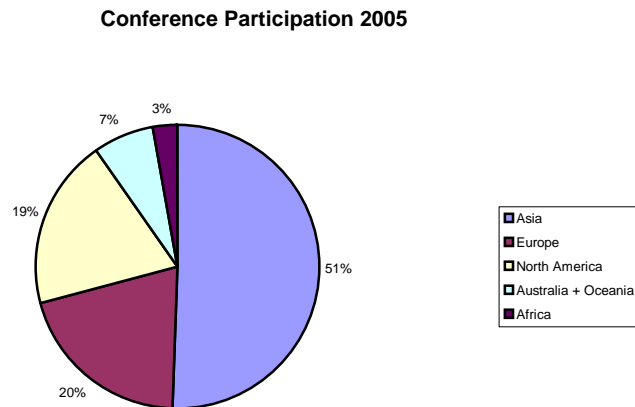
Internet Governance was discussed in a plenary on the World Summit on the Information Society deliberations. Presentations by Professor Wolfgang Kleinwächter, University of Aarhus, Professor Hopeton Dunn, University of the West Indies, and Professor Chen-Geng Tso, Yuan Ze University, Taiwan, emphasized the contest over how the Internet should be controlled and the role of the United States government.

The concluding plenary offered contributions by Professor Kaarle Nordenstreng, University of Tampere, who marked the 25th Anniversary of the MacBride Report, *Many Voices, One World*, the work of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems established by UNESCO. Professor Janet Wasko, University of Oregon, highlighted the importance of political economy research in a new media era. Dr. Tanja Storsul, University of Oslo, observed that 'new media panics' are often about old – but still important – questions. 'Media panic' discourses serve as rhetorical tools for political and economic interests. Professor Lian-Wen Kuo, National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan, discussed relationships between the Media Industry (ethics, professionalism, and self-regulation), Government (media law

and policy and infrastructure) and Civil Society (audiences, media literacy, and empowerment). This relationship is key to understanding both 'media panics' and democracy. He emphasized the importance of alternative media and participatory communication, and the potential for emancipation through critical media education.

Further detail on participation:

The total registered participants were 277. They came from 39 countries with the regional and country distribution shown below in the Graph and Table.



Of the 140 Asian participants, 65 were from Taiwan, 26 from Japan. Of the 54 North and South America participants, 41 were from the US.

Country	Country
Australia	15
Austria	1
Belgium	7
Brazil	3
Canada	3
China	2
Denmark	3
Egypt	3
Finland	3
France	2
Germany	10
Girona*	1
Hong Kong	1
India	3
Indonesia	1
Iran	2
Ireland	4
Israel	7
Jamaica	3
Japan	26
Korea	11
Malaysia	4
Mexico	4
Netherlands	3
New Zealand	4
Nigeria	4
Norway	4
Philippines	2
Portugal	2
Saudi Arabia	5
Singapore	5
South Africa	1
Spain	6
Sri Lanka	2
Sweden	3
Taiwan	65
Thailand	3
United Arab Emirates	1
United Kingdom	7
USA	41
100	177
TOTAL 277	

* Girona is in Spain

Of course there were disappointments for some – connected with the persistent problem of 'no-shows', how to find out about them in advance, and what to do if a given session really becomes depleted. We will never completely resolve this

problem, but we can try new measures and next year I hope to report better success in fund raising for travel.

People make conferences happen ...

There are occasions when saying thank you to people really does not suffice! I want to thank again Professor Lucie Cheng and her team of students and Professor Paul Mu, President of Shih Hsin University, for their very gracious and effective support in every respect. The Local Organising Committee did an outstanding job of making the conference a success.

I also want to thank all the members of the International Council including Section Heads and also Working Group Chairs (and in some cases their designates) who contributed to the successful organisation of sessions and who coped in one way or another with the absences of those who, in end, could not finance their trips or could not come for other reasons. Last, but by no means least, thanks to Ole Prehn for all his work and to my other Executive Board colleagues for their many contributions.

Next conference ...

The main biennial IAMCR conference in 2006 will be hosted by the American University of Cairo, 23-28 July. The conference theme - **knowledge societies, the media and communications** - will critically examine debates and actions in this area. Visit www.iamcr.net for information about the conference or to join IAMCR.

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19 August 2005